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SUBJECT: Mozambique - Monitoring and Evaluation Visit to Maratane Refugee Camp, September 24-25

Ref: Maputo 428

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¶1. Summary: PRM/PIM officer Perlita Muiruri conducted a monitoring and evaluation trip in Mozambique in late September. The trip consisted of a visit to Maratane camp in northern Mozambique and discussions with UNHCR staff in Maputo and Nampula, as well as briefings from the implementing partners in the camp.

¶2. The population of asylum-seekers continues to grow in Mozambique, due to a slow but steady flow of new arrivals from the Great Lakes region. The population stood at 4,899 when PRM refugee officer Perlita Muiruri visited the Maratane camp. The government of Mozambique (GRM) allows refugees and asylum-seekers to live outside Maratane refugee camp as long as they are self-sufficient. For this reason, UNHCR is emphasizing the implementation of a comprehensive self-reliance strategy for refugees. UNHCR is advocating with the GRM for creation of a legal framework for local integration that will permit refugees to settle permanently in Mozambique if voluntary repatriation is not a viable option. The GRM will begin tripartite talks with UNHCR and the Government of Rwanda in October 2006 to facilitate the repatriation of approximately 400 Rwandan refugees in Maratane. UNHCR believes repatriation of Burundian and Congolese refugees will gain momentum once political circumstances in those countries stabilize and as assistance in the camp gradually diminishes. End Summary

Background on Maratane Camp

¶3. Maratane camp is located in northern Mozambique near the city of Nampula. The camp was established in February 2001 and covers an area of 170 square kilometers. The almost 5,000 refugees currently in the camp are mainly from the Bembe ethnic group of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Congolese refugees make up 77.7% of refugees in the camp, 13.5% are Burundians, 7.7% are Rwandese and only 1.1% are from Somalia and Sudan.

¶4. Implementing partners in the camp include; the GRM Foreign Ministry's Institute of Refugee Assistance (INAR) World Vision, Save the Children-US, and World Relief. INAR is in charge of camp management and maintenance of camp infrastructure and roads, as well as security issues. World Vision has responsibility for community services, GBV programs, HIV/AIDS, and education. Save the Children managed the food distribution program until October 2006

when this responsibility was transferred to WFP. (Beginning in January 2007, WFP will assume the cost of the program as well.) Save the Children also manages the health clinic in the camp and nutrition programming. World Relief runs all the refugee integration programs, encompassing agriculture, animal husbandry, vocational training, and micro-credit programs.

PRM Camp Visit September 24-25

¶ 15. PRM officer Muiruri spoke at length with UNHCR program officer Giovanni Lepri during plane travel from Maputo to Nampula. Lepri highlighted UNHCR-Geneva's desire to phase out the majority of UNHCR involvement in Maratane within the next two years. Lepri believes this will be possible with improved conditions in the Great Lakes region and fewer new arrivals. In this period the existing camp population of refugees and asylum-seekers should be able to repatriate or take advantage of the GRM's policy in support of local integration. Lepri said UNHCR's current emphasis is on improving the capacity of the GRM to manage the existing refugee population, while simultaneously providing refugees with the skills to become self-sufficient enough for local integration.

¶ 16. Muiruri visited the camp, escorted by John Tabayi, head of the UNHCR field office in Nampula, and INAR representatives. The camp appeared well organized and service standards seemed quite high. Family compounds were fenced and generally included sufficient space to grow vegetables or maintain animals. As an indicator of the camp's relative affluence, UNHCR had recently cut fresh fish and vegetables from the rations provided to each family. Muiruri saw the camp's well-maintained health center, which provides basic primary health care services to 50-100

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patients (both refugees and locals) every day. She was told that the GRM provides essential medical supplies and the health staff for the facility. Difficult cases are referred to Nampula provincial hospital and emergency cases are taken by ambulance to the hospital. There are plans underway to upgrade the health facility to a clinic, which will meet GRM standards, by installing a water system and building an incinerator.

¶ 17. Muiruri saw two schools in the camp. One school conducts classes in Portuguese and conforms to the standards set by the Mozambican government. This Mozambican school has 779 students and is housed in three separate stone buildings. Because of concerns voiced by refugees about the utility of a Mozambican education in their future lives, a second school, with classes taught in French, has been established. The French school has 765 students and is currently housed in temporary plastic shelters.

¶ 18. As part of UNHCR's focus on promoting local integration through self-sufficiency, World Relief manages several income generating projects. The World Relief representative highlighted their animal husbandry project, which gives refugee families (collectively) 500 chicks to be maintained on their compounds. The families are educated on caring for the chickens, assisted in building coops on their compounds, and assisted in selling the eggs or the chickens at market. World Relief also manages an agricultural project on growing tomatoes and other vegetables for sale in the local markets. As part of this project, World Relief provides product transport from the camp to various viable economic outlets.

¶ 19. According to World Relief and UNHCR field officers, refugees have not taken advantage of these projects in large numbers. In their opinion, refugees hesitate to make efforts which could improve their potential self-sufficiency, because they are hoping to be resettled rather

than locally integrated. UNHCR field officers attributed this persistent hope among the refugees to a resettlement effort conducted by UNHCR in 2004-2005 which referred several hundred cases for resettlement to the United States. Rumors of future resettlement efforts continue to influence the current refugee population and attract new arrivals to the camp. (In interviews with the PRM/PIM program officer, new Congolese arrivals to the camp said they had bypassed refugee camps in Zambia and Tanzania because Maratane "has a good reputation." UNHCR officers believe Maratane has this reputation because it is perceived as an easy camp to be resettled from.)

¶10. The refugee camp committee presented refugee concerns during a meeting attended by UNHCR officers, INAR representatives, the implementing partners, and PRM/PIM officer Perlita Muiruri. The committee president voiced concern about the amount and quality of the food rations, the lack of adequate security in the camp and the insufficient supply of medicines. These concerns led to a request by the committee that refugees in the camp be resettled immediately. The committee dismissed the possibility of repatriation because of continued instability in the Great Lakes region. They also rejected the possibility of local integration because of what they considered arbitrary arrests of refugees that were sanctioned by the GRM. (Comment: Based on discussions with implementing partners, there was no evidence supporting the committee's claims, however. End Comment.)

Resettlement

¶11. In a separate meeting in Maputo on September 25, UNHCR Representative Victoria Akyeampong emphasized UNHCR's concern that the perceived potential for resettlement from Maratane camp was preventing the current refugee population from considering the benefits of repatriation or local integration. Akyeampong noted an attempt to refer approximately 1,000 refugees for resettlement had been made in 2005, but irregularities in the process resulted in a backlog of 400-600 cases. The delay and the long process of interviewing families helped create a persistent expectation of resettlement on the part of all refugees in the camp. The continued hope that they will be considered as candidates for resettlement to the United States or Canada has made refugees uninterested in any activities that might facilitate a different durable solution, according to Akyeampong.

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¶12. Akyeampong said that UNHCR was considering reducing assistance to the refugees as a method of encouraging participation in income-generating projects and other programs which facilitate self-sufficiency. A complicating factor was the attitude of the GRM, which does not favor refugee resettlement from Mozambique, she said. According to UNHCR, the GRM was cooperative on the issue of local integration, but as a matter of national pride did not want to welcome refugees who consider permanent relocation to Mozambique the least desirable durable solution.

Refugee Status Determinations (RSD)

¶13. The GRM currently has a backlog in excess of 4,000 cases awaiting refugee status determination. In 2005 the GRM processed only 150 cases, and in 2006 they have adjudicated 245 cases so far. According to UNHCR, the acceptance rate was 99.9%. The significant backlog was mainly caused by a requirement that the Minister of Interior personally sign-off on each case. Another concern with the current process was that several key ministries, working under the

immigration authority instead of INAR, were represented on the Eligibility Committee that makes the refugee status determinations.

¶14. According to Akyeampong, INAR, with UNHCR guidance, conducts the RSD interviews. INAR has only 30 full-time staff covering the entire country. As a result, RSD interviews are done sporadically, the Eligibility Committee does its work very slowly and cases pile up in the Foreign Minister's office. UNHCR focused its efforts this year on assisting the GRM to improve efficiency in the RSD process, by providing training to GRM officials, financial aid in staffing-up the relevant ministries, and a protection officer to work with the GRM. UNHCR anticipates that the visit of a regional RSD officer next year will help make the process more efficient.

UNHCR Plans

¶15. According to Akyeampong, UNHCR plans to hand over management of a number of camp activities in Maratane to INAR this year, in anticipation of eventually handing over management of the entire settlement to the GRM. UNHCR will offer significant financial and administrative assistance to the Ministry's Institute of Refugee Assistance (INAR) to increase its capacity. UNHCR Mozambique has also focused its efforts on building the capacity of the GRM to conduct RSD in accordance with its international obligations. This includes financial assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and recruitment of a UNHCR RSD officer to help rationalize the process in Mozambique. UNHCR plans to launch an information campaign to encourage refugees to consider return and to ensure they fully understand that resettlement may not be a realistic option for the majority. For those who do not want to repatriate, UNHCR and the GRM will continue to focus on efforts to promote local integration and self-sufficiency. According to UNHCR Maputo, UNHCR will eventually manage its operations in Mozambique from a regional office in Pretoria and only maintain a physical presence in Mozambique at the Nampula field office.

Comment

¶16. Overall UNHCR, the GRM and other implementing partners have done a good job in providing basic assistance and protection to refugees in Mozambique's Maratane camp. UNHCR is working closely with the GRM to address shortcomings, most notably the backlog in RSD processing. They are also grappling with the negative impact on potential voluntary repatriation and local integration programs caused by refugee hopes for resettlement.

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